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Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 02815 070755Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6944

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 2815

EXDIS
DEPT PASS WHITE HOUSE
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL VISIT: DRAFT OF LAGOS ARRIVAL STATEMENT

REF: STATE 48397

1. GENERAL OBASANJO, DISTINGUISHED OFFICIALS AND PEOPLE OF NIGERIA: AS THE FIRST AMERICAN PRESIDENT TO OFFICIALLY VISIT THE AFRICAN CONTINENT, THIS IS A VISIT WHICH IS LONG OVERDUE. ESPECIALLY SO WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THAT IT WAS 359 YEARS AGO THAT HISTORY RECORDS THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST AFRICANS TO LAND IN AMERICA. TODAY MORE THAN ONE IN TEN AMERICANS FOREFATHERS HAVE COME FROM YOUR CONTINENT.

2. MORE THAN EVER BEFORE THESE AMERICANS, ANO INDEED ALL AMERICANS, ARE LOOKING BACK WITH INCREASED INTEREST TO THESE ORIGINS. ONE OF AMERICA'S RENOWNED BLACK MEN, COUNTEE CULLEN, SAID IN ONE OF HIS POEMS WHEN SPEAKING OF HIS FOREFATHERS AND THEIR AFRICAN HERITAGE:
"WHO PLANTS A SEED BEGETS A BUD,
EXTRACT OF THE SAME ROOT..."

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ROOT WAS THE SUBJECT OF A RECENT HISTORICAL NOVEL, ITSELF ENTITLED ROOTS, AND A TELEVISION SERIES BASED ON THIS NOVEL WAS RECENTLY
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WATCHED BY MORE VIEWERS THAN ANY OTHER TELEVISION

ADAPTATION IN AMERICAN HISTORY. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, THESE ROOTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN OUR PRESENT RELATIONS WITH YOUR COUNTRY.

4. LET ME ALSO EXPRESS MY PERSONAL SATISFACTION THAT THIS

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VISIT TO AFRICA BEGINS WITH NIGERIA. THE STRENGTH AND VITA-
LITY OF YOUR POPULATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF NIGERIA IN BOTH
AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS WOULD MAKE THIS APPROPRIATE IN
ANY EVENT. BUT
THERE ARE OTHER ASPECTS OF NIGERIA WICH HAVE MADE A
DISTINCIIVE IMPRESSION ON THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. SINCE WE AMERI-
CANS STRUGGLED HARD OVER A LONG PERIOD OF
TIME TO HEAL THE WOUND
LEFT BEHIND BY OUR OWN TRAGIC
CIVIL WAR, WE HAVE VIEWED WITH SPECIAL ADMIRATION THE COMPASS-
IONATE SPIRIT IN WHICH NIGERIANS HAVE CONFRONTED
AND ACCOMPLISHED THIS DIFFICULT TASK. WE HAVE ALSO
BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE VIGOR AND DETERMINATION WITH WHICH
YOU ARE PURSUING THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR
COUNTRY, AND BY THE MANNER IN WHICH YOU HAVE ADDRESSED THE
FASHIONING OF A NEW CONSTITUTION. IN THE INTERNATIONAL
ARENA OUR PEOPLE HAVE NOTED WITH APPROVAL NIGERIA'S ROLE
AS AN ACTIVE ADVOCATE FOR PEACE AND THE RESOLUTION
OF DIFFERENCES.

5. WE AMERICANS WERE PRIVILEGED LAST YEAR TO HAVE THE
HONOR OF RECEIVING GENERAL OBASANJO ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE
UNITED STATE. IT WAS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME TO ACCEPT HIS
GRACIOUS INVITATION FOR A RETURN VISIT. I BELIEVE OUR
GROWING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP CAN PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART
IN STRENGTHENING THE DIRECT EXCHANGE OF IDEAS, PEOPLE,
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CULTURE AND TRADE BETWEEN OUR TWOFOUNTRIES.

6. IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS I LOOK FORWARD TO DISCUSSING WITH
YOUR GOVERNMENT SUBJECTS WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO OUR
BILATERAL RELATIONS AS WELL AS BROADER ISSUDS WHICH ARE
OF PARTIAULAR IMPORTANCE TO AFRICA AND INDEED TO THE
ENTIRE WORLD. I LOOK FORWARD WEVEN MORE EAGERLY TO THE
OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH THE
NIGERIAN PEOPLE AND TO SEE SOMETHING OF THIS GREAT
COUNTRY.

7. FINALLY, ON BEHALF OF ALL AMERICANS, LET ME THANK
YOU FOR THIS WARM AND FRIENDLY WELCOME. I ALREADY
FEEL AT HOME.
EASUM

NOTE BY OC/T; EXDIS ADDED PER SSO - MS KENNEDY 3/7/78

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NNN

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